

Education

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Open Communication Strengthens Student Learning

*If my possessions were taken from me with one exception,
I would choose to keep the power of communication, for by
it I would soon regain all the rest.*

—Daniel Webster

Across Canada, the month of May was celebrated as Speech and Hearing Awareness Month, giving us the opportunity to reflect on the power of communication and to recognize the prominent role it plays in today's diverse and fast-paced world.

Through ongoing communication, schools, families, and communities work together to ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to succeed in their academic and working lives. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth has produced a series of *Working Together* documents that

address such areas as positive problem solving, children with exceptional learning needs, and safety, all of which recognize the importance of communication. *Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving* makes the point that "the first step for building strong relationships in schools is the first step for building any strong relationship: talk to each other."

The Department is pleased to support initiatives that reinforce the value of communication between families and schools, such as the release of a number of documents specifically for parents. For example, *Working Together: Safe, Caring Schools, Families and Communities* is a brochure that provides answers to questions parents may have about the safety of their children, as well as contact information for a wide range of community and school resources available to families. One of the most recent documents, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents and Families of Aboriginal Students*, has accompanying CDs that provide oral versions of the print document in English, French, Cree, and Ojibwe.

Core curriculum subjects such as English language arts and social studies also stress community through

communication. The language arts are used to explore thoughts, manage ideas, respond to and create texts, and build community. The new Grade 9 Social Studies curriculum emphasizes the development of respectful listening, speaking, and collaborative skills, which will help students live together in Canada and in the global village, participating as active and responsible democratic citizens. Programming in English as an additional language also focuses on community connections by building on the linguistic and cultural knowledge of learners of English who may already speak a number of languages and/or dialects.

In addition to fostering a strong commitment to language across the curriculum, Manitoba has a long history of providing specialized communication services. Manitoba was the first jurisdiction in North America to pass legislation regulating the practice of "speech and hearing therapy." Speech-language pathology services began in schools in Winnipeg in 1938, making Manitoba one of the first provinces in Canada to provide such a service to school-age children.

Let's celebrate and build on the Department's efforts to strengthen our schools and communities through open communication.

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Social Studies Implementation Timelines

Timelines for the implementation of the new Grades 5 to 9 social studies curricula have been extended by one year. The chart below gives the newly extended dates.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 Implementation Timelines		
	Voluntary Implementation	System-Wide Implementation
Kindergarten to Grade 4	2004-2005	2005-2006
Grades 5 to 8	2005-2006	2006-2007
Grade 9	2006-2007	2007-2008
Grade 10	2006-2007	2007-2008
Grade 11	2007-2008	2008-2009
Grade 12	2007-2008	2008-2009

Celebration of Excellence in Teaching

On March 22, 2007, seven teachers were recognized as the first recipients of Manitoba's Celebration of Excellence in Teaching—Minister's Awards, 2006–2007. The awards celebrate innovative and exemplary teaching practices that contribute to student achievement in Manitoba schools.

Three awards for Teaching Excellence were presented: Rachelle Law of École Héritage Immersion in Red River Valley School Division received one for Early Years; Michelle Lee of Angus McKay School in River East Transcona School Division received the award for Middle Years; and Michael Patenaude of Grant Park High School in the Winnipeg School Division received the award for Senior Years.

The award for Outstanding New Teacher went to Christopher J. Yaremkiwich of Strathcona School in Winnipeg School Division. Three teachers from the École Pointe-des-Chênes in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM)—Claudette Gagné, Colette Espenell, and Diane Dupuis—received the Team Collaboration award.

Congratulations to all winners and nominees!

People and Stories of Canada to 1867

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with E. Leigh Syms

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People and Stories of Canada to 1867 correlates closely with the Manitoba Grade 5 Social Studies curriculum. This highly visual student resource contains many pedagogical features to promote student success, including the following:

- Aboriginal perspectives
- primary documents and high quality photographs as sources of information
- appropriate stories to make Canadian history relevant to students
- charts, tables, and maps
- headings and subheadings that organize information into smaller sections
- timelines to organize chronological information
- "Did You Know?" boxes to expand students' knowledge

Added features include the following:

- Pronunciation Guide
- Glossary
- Index



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A teacher's guide is under
development—available soon!

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Kindergarten to Grade 12 Implementation Timelines		
Grade	Curriculum Implementation	Assessment—Whole School Implementation
Kindergarten	2004-2006	2006-2007 school year
Grades 5 to 9	2005-2008	2008-2009 school year
Grade 10	2005-2008	2008-2009 school year
Grade 11	2004-2007	2007-2008 school year
Grade 12	TBA	TBA
	TBA	TBA

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Igniting Interest in Technology and Engineering

Grade 5 students from William Whyte School learned skills that may one day lead them to careers in technology and engineering. William Whyte School, the Province of Manitoba, and IBM Canada partnered to hold an IGNITE camp at the school in February. IGNITE stands for Igniting Interest in Technology and Engineering. It is a program developed by IBM to encourage Aboriginal students to remain interested in mathematics, science, and technology and to consider future careers in technology and engineering.

During the four-day camp, students assembled electronic circuits, built and programmed robots, designed



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web pages, and heard about future career and educational opportunities in technology and engineering. The camp included tours to the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, the Manitoba Museum's Science Gallery, and Red River College.

Students were excited to work with parents and adult mentors at their side. The camp included information sessions planned specifically for the adults. Both students and adults pieced together their own understanding of technology and its opportunities.

This is the second IGNITE camp that IBM has sponsored in

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Manitoba. The first camp was held at Children of the Earth High School. The most recent camp was a pilot project to determine whether IGNITE camps might become an annual event for Grade 5 students at William Whyte and other Manitoba schools. As other students see these Grade 5 students excited about technology, they may look forward to experiencing the camp themselves when they reach fifth grade.

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Summer Learning Calendar

Watch for the summer learning calendar that Manitoba

Education, Citizenship and Youth has developed to create awareness of the importance of continuous learning. The calendar suggests literacy and numeracy activities parents and children can do together to make learning a "fun" part of their summer.

The calendar will be distributed to schools before the end of the school year. Principals will be asked to send the calendars home with their Grade 2 students.

Here is an excerpt from the calendar's introduction.

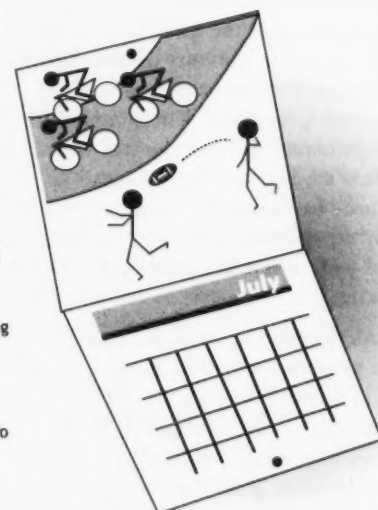
What can we learn today?

Summer is a time for discovering new places, new activities, and new opportunities with family and friends. With your support, your child's summer can be transformed into a time to stretch the mind, explore new hobbies, learn about responsibility, and build on skills learned during the school year.

Devoting a few hours a week to fun, exciting learning activities can help your child

- keep an active mind
- build on what he or she already knows and can do
- explore new ideas and interests
- fill in some learning gaps
- strengthen skills in literacy and numeracy

Keep it simple, keep it fun, keep it stimulating ... and watch your child grow in confidence.



4 Summer Professional Learning Opportunities

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth will once again be offering workshops during the month of August for educators.

The Summer 2007 Professional Learning Opportunities brochure and poster was sent to schools and school divisions in April. It is also available online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/proflearn/> for educators to access.

Sessions will be offered this year for Aboriginal languages, arts, assessment, English as an additional language, English language arts, mathematics, physical education/health education, science, social studies, and sustainable development.

Feedback from teachers who attended the Summer Professional Learning Opportunities in August 2006 was positive and appreciative:

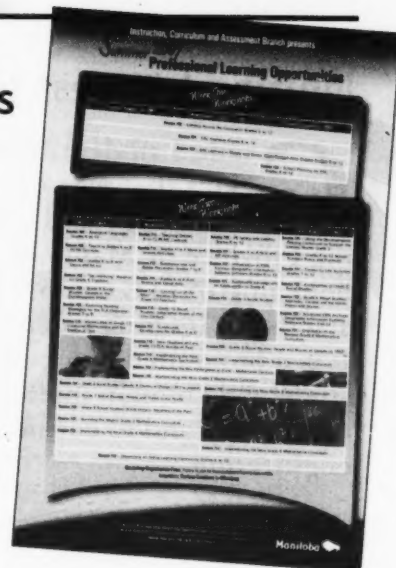
"All presenters were very well prepared, knowledgeable, and very resourceful. I had a great time and got many great ideas to try in my teaching."

"The EAL session really brought the [curriculum] document to life for me (and all)."

"I really liked the time (in late August) for the institute because it got me motivated for the coming year. Also, doing PD in the summer gives you time to process the information."

"My second year—I truly found it worthwhile and will continue to come if sessions look valuable to me."

"Excellent presenter; solid, useful material; appreciate hands-on going through curriculum not just philosophy."



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Increasing Student Achievement

Prompted by recent research on factors that lead to increased achievement, assessment practices have been changing—not only in Manitoba but around the world.

Studies suggest that two factors seem to offer the greatest potential for increasing achievement: more student involvement in the learning process and increased amounts of descriptive feedback with less emphasis on evaluative feedback. These represent fundamental shifts in the way we assess student learning and lead to equally fundamental changes in the way we communicate with students and with others about student learning.

Students need to be at the centre of the process—aware of learning goals and criteria, giving and receiving feedback on work related to those goals, and using that feedback to set new learning goals for themselves. In this process, descriptive feedback is much more powerful and motivating than traditional evaluative feedback (grades) in promoting ongoing learning.

Communicating with students about their learning, then, needs to focus on building awareness of what they are doing well and on collaboratively setting new goals to take that learning forward. Similarly, when we extend the communication to the students' families, the focus needs to include this kind of information as well as information on the students' current level of achievement of the learning goals. Involving students in the communication phase helps them take increasing responsibility for their learning—an important part of becoming lifelong learners.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is currently developing a support document on communicating student learning that will develop some of these ideas and provide guidelines for communication practices (including reporting) that are most supportive of ongoing

learning. Noted Canadian assessment expert Ken O'Connor and his colleague Damian Cooper are the key writers of the document. Educator feedback on the first draft was collected in preparation for the final publication.

This new document, together with *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind: Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, Assessment of Learning*, is intended to foster reflection and dialogue about assessment and communication practices. We are pleased to have had the opportunity to work with numerous school divisions in moving this agenda forward, and we are excited about the number and quality of school- and division-based initiatives under way to develop assessment and reporting guidelines and policy in this area.

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Update on National and International Assessments

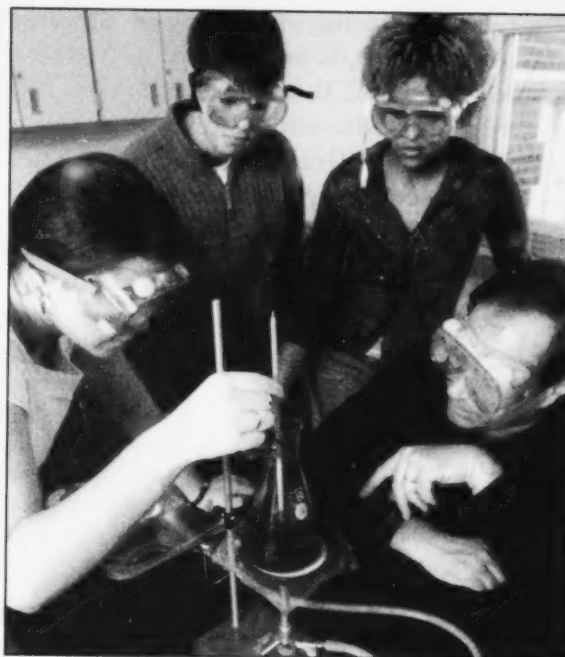
In the last two weeks of May 2007, students in over 200 schools in Manitoba will be participating in the first administration of the new Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP). PCAP replaces SAIP (School Achievement Indicators Program), which was last administered in the spring of 2004 to 13- and 16-year-olds and which focused on science. As with SAIP, PCAP is overseen by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and is established and supported according to agreements among ministers of education.

PCAP differs from SAIP in two notable respects. SAIP was administered annually to 13- and 16-year olds, cycling through the domains of reading, writing, science, and mathematics. PCAP will assess 13-year-olds only once every three years and will include the three domains—reading, mathematics, and science—at each administration. Each of the three domains will have its turn being the “major” domain, meaning there will be more items and more students assessed in that domain, and it will be the focus of most subsequent analysis.

Initial results from the PCAP 2007 administration are scheduled for release in December of 2007. This will coincide with the release of results from PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), which was administered in the spring of 2006. PISA targets 15-year-olds and is administered every three years (2000, 2003, 2006, and so on). PISA also assesses mathematics, reading, and science, with each domain taking its turn as the major domain (the same design as PCAP). The major domain for PISA in 2006 was science, providing an opportunity to reflect further on the SAIP science results from 2004 when the same cohort of students was assessed as 13-year-olds. Published reports for SAIP and PISA assessments are available on the CMEC website at <www.cmec.ca> (follow the “Assessment” links).

By design, the timing of PCAP and PISA is such that it will be possible to track cohorts of students from 13 years old to 15 years old in terms of their achievement in the major domain of each of the assessments. This spring (2007) the major PCAP domain is reading. Reading will also be the major domain for PISA in 2009.

For PCAP in 2007, three different assessment booklets will be distributed randomly among students, two focusing on reading and one containing a combination of mathematics and science items. The assessment also



includes questionnaires for students, teachers, and school administrators, which are designed to gather information about the students and the context in which their education takes place. Each selected school (schools are randomly selected by CMEC) assigns a coordinator who administers the assessment according to instructions provided by CMEC. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth acknowledges and thanks teachers, students, and school administrators and support staff for their efforts, which ensure that resulting data and information from the assessment are as accurate as possible.

Our participation in national and international assessments, our classroom-based provincial assessment programs at Grades 3, 7, and 8 that focus on competencies in language arts and mathematics, and our standards tests at Grade 12 represent a balanced system of assessments designed to inform teachers about academic strengths and weaknesses pertinent to their students, classrooms, and schools, as well as to keep parents, stakeholders, and the public informed about the achievement of Manitoba students and about the efficacy of our education system.

Further information about provincial assessments is available on the Department's website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/>.

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Keeping Manitoba Schools Green

Green Manitoba, an agency of the provincial government, is committed to a greener future for Manitobans. To achieve this, Green Manitoba has developed green educational resources and programming for Kindergarten to Grade 12 educators. These activities replace the discontinued Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation (MPSC) Students Taking Action on Recycling (STAR) program.

Recognizing the importance of building relationships and using best practices, Green Manitoba is working with Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to align resources with curriculum learning outcomes in connection with the Education for Sustainable Development initiative. Green Manitoba also partners with local not-for-profit and environmental organizations, such as Take Pride Winnipeg!, Resource Conservation Manitoba, and Fort Whyte Alive, in developing and implementing its school programming.



Green Manitoba
An Agency of the Manitoba Government

Green Manitoba has been working to identify opportunities that support waste-minimization learning and action in Manitoba Kindergarten to

This interactive aspect of the program enables Manitoba students and teachers in isolated, rural, and Aboriginal communities to connect with each other and share best practices related to environmental issues in their local areas.

Grade 12 schools with an emphasis beyond Recycling and toward the other Rs: Rethink, Reuse, Recover, Reduce, and Restore. Opportunities to promote learning and action on other green issues in schools, such as energy efficiency and water conservation, are also being identified.

Canadian Youth Eco Parliament

In addition to supporting other initiatives in Manitoba schools, Green

Manitoba is the regional sponsor of Canadian Youth Eco Parliament (CYEP), an environmental leadership program for youth that engages high school students across Canada in competitive "eco projects" designed to assess and reduce their ecological footprints. (See <www.yep-canada.ca> for more information.)

Winning schools are eligible for regional and national prizes, including an opportunity for students to attend a national stewardship

conference in 2007. Canadian Youth Eco Parliament connects the local projects of students and teachers within the larger context of a national initiative that takes action to achieve the goals of environmental stewardship and broad economical and social sustainability issues.

CYEP includes web-based applications including online project forms and web forums that allow interactive dialogue between expert guests and students across Canada. This interactive aspect of the program enables Manitoba students and teachers in isolated, rural, and Aboriginal communities to connect with each other and share best practices related to environmental issues in their local areas.

As a regional sponsor and coordinator for participating schools, Green Manitoba has committed up to \$25,000 of in-kind and cash support to assist with program costs. Green Manitoba's role also includes helping to align projects to provincial priorities and other school programming and related community-based green initiatives. These include the Education for Sustainable Development initiative and the provincial Green and Growing strategic framework.

High school teachers and students are encouraged to visit the website and plan their involvement in CYEP in the fall of 2007. Work on eco projects can begin as early as September, and students from winning schools across Canada will be eligible to attend an environmental event in Prague, Czech Republic, in May 2008.

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(go to "Teachers Resources")



Making Education Inclusive

From exploring traditional knowledge in Manitoba's North to sharing career possibilities with residents of Winnipeg's inner city, Dawn Sutherland is known for bringing unique perspectives together for a common goal: making education inclusive.

Named Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Science Education on July 19, 2006, Sutherland explores the relationship between culture and science education in indigenous communities, in particular in her home province of Manitoba. She wants to see the teachings of Aboriginal culture incorporated into school curricula so that science education is more meaningful, interesting, and relevant for Aboriginal students.

Profile

Dr. Dawn Sutherland is an Associate Professor in the Education Program of the University of Winnipeg. Among her research interests are the development of understandings related to building capacity and resilience among traditionally under-represented groups in science, and connections between indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and modern science teaching/learning. Dawn holds a doctorate in science education from the University of Nottingham in England and has worked on a number of key curriculum projects undertaken by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth in recent years. These include *Current Topics in the Sciences* at Grade 11, Senior Years biology, and the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Science Curriculum Steering Committee. Dawn enjoys spending joyful times with her young daughter as they explore the world hand in hand.



Currently, Canada's Aboriginal students are significantly under-represented among those who pursue studies in post-secondary mathematics, applied science, or physical science. But by teaching them science in a way that is culturally relevant, Sutherland, an education professor, believes the doors to higher education and science-based careers will swing wide open. "The idea is to make science learning relevant and interesting—to put it into a context that students are exposed to day to day," says Sutherland. For some students, this means developing creative techniques, such as incorporating the indigenous

knowledge of trappers, Elders, and Aboriginal community members who live off the land, to help students engage with the science curriculum.

In her research, Sutherland is collaborating with colleagues from around the world to develop an academic framework for teaching science that teachers can follow in their classrooms. This includes using a consensus-building strategy that will have science education scholars from indigenous settings develop a statement that reflects a global understanding of indigenous science knowledge.

Recently, Sutherland has been exploring the decision-making process curriculum developers, administrators, and teachers use when developing culturally relevant learning experiences for their student populations. Graduate student Natalie Swayze from Winnipeg and Nisichawayasihk Collegiate (NNOC) principal Natalie Tays are reflecting on the process they used to develop and implement programs for Aboriginal students in their own settings. These two individuals will then

be travelling to Costa Rica to explore the curriculum development and programming decisions made in an indigenous school. The research will help educators understand the importance that a "sense of place" has on the teaching and learning of science.

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Learning through Oral Language

By Sharon Halldorson

Director of Educational and Clinical Support Services, Seven Oaks School Division

May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month, when we celebrate the growth of oral language in young children. Speaking and listening skills are the foundation of literacy development. Focused discussion within classrooms engages students and supports their learning in significant ways.

Speech/language researcher Wayne Secord asserts that there are six major ways that oral language facilitates comprehension and learning: questioning, processing, expressive clarity, retrieving meaning, reinterpreting, and projecting.

How do we get at those crucial aspects of language, which are essential to the overall learning process? In Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD), our model of support to schools helps to promote the development and enhancement of these areas for all children, but particularly for those who have learning profiles that are different from the norm.

- *Questioning*—If children are in the habit of asking good questions, it will help them in all of their future learning. In SOSD, the book club approach provides a good example of this. Students are encouraged to express what they are wondering (inquiry) and what they are thinking (inference). Students come to know that if they ask questions, they will learn new information.

- *Processing of language*—In SOSD, students learn how to listen and interpret information effectively as part of social skills programming. School teams explicitly teach the rules of conversation in whole class lessons.

How do we get at those crucial aspects of language, which are essential to the overall learning process?

- *Expressive clarity*—This aspect of learning encompasses a wide range of communication goals and is addressed through all of our classroom-based activities in SOSD. Using a collaborative approach, educators learn to enhance language expression in their students, by observing facilitative techniques modelled by the speech-language pathologist.
- *Retrieving meaning for comprehension*—This often requires a multi-modal approach. Much of our SOSD programming is presented in differentiated ways. For example, the team may use drama based on a curricular theme. All students are

involved in planning, performing, and reviewing a play and many domains of learning are used, from the artistic to the reflective.

- *Reinterpreting*—This calls upon students to use past experiences to synthesize new learning. In story retelling, for example, the students are asked to discuss related experiences prior to and after reading a story. When students use real-world knowledge, story comprehension is enhanced. Acting out portions of the story with reference to student experiences can also help students comprehend.
- *Projecting into the future*—This is based on past experience and existing knowledge. In both story retelling and guided retelling, prediction and inference are important components. As mentioned earlier, the book club approach encourages students to use inference during book discussions, by sharing their thoughts about stories.

These examples represent a very small number of the activities and ideas we foster in Seven Oaks School Division, where collaboration is the norm and inclusion the goal. The speech-language pathologist is an integral member of our classroom-based teams that promote learning through the development of oral language skills in children.

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A similar document has been developed by the Bureau de l'éducation française Division for the Français and the French Immersion Programs.

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We invite contributions to *Education Manitoba*. When forwarding submissions, please include your name and telephone number, and send materials in print and electronic formats to:

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We also want to hear what you think about our newsletter. Please send your comments, ideas, and suggestions to the address specified above.



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